

Message Text

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PAGE 01 VIENTI 08139 01 OF 02 010658Z

11

ACTION DPW-01

INFO OCT-01 EA-11 IO-14 ISO-00 OMB-01 AID-20 CIAE-00

DODE-00 PM-07 H-03 INR-10 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-10 PA-04

RSC-01 PRS-01 SPC-03 SS-20 USIA-15 ACDA-19 DRC-01

/145 W

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R 010550Z DEC 73

FM AMEMBASSY VIENTIANE

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 6819

INFO AMEMBASSY BANGKOK

AMEMBASSY PHNOM PENH

AMEMBASSY SAIGON

USMISSION GENEVA

CDR JCRC NKP

CHMN USDEL FPJMT SAIGON

CINCPAC

LIMITED OFFICIAL USE SECTION 1 OF 2 VIENTIANE 8139

E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: MOPS, LA

SUBJECT: POW/MIA'S

REFS: (A) STATE 234675 (B) VIENTIANE 6351 (C) VIENTIANE 7959
(D) VIENTIANE 4775

1. IMPROVEMENT OF THE POW/MIA SITUATION IN LAOS HAS
DEPENDENED ON THE PACE OF PROGRESS TOWARD FORMATION OF
THE NEW COALITION GOVERNMENT. IN MAY AND JUNE, THE
SENIOR LAO PATRIOTIC FRONT (LPF) DELEGATES IN VIENTIANE,
DURING FREQUENT DEMARCHES MADE BY EMBASSY OFFICIALS,
CONTINUALLY EMPHASIZED THAT ANY POW/MIA QUESTIONS COULD
NOT BE ADDRESSED UNTIL AFTER THE SIGNING OF THE PROTOCOL
IMPLEMENTING THE FEBRUARY 21 AGREEMENT. CONSEQUENTLY,
THE EMBASSY WORKED TO ACCELERATE THE SIGNING OF THE
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PAGE 02 VIENTI 08139 01 OF 02 010658Z

PROTOCOL AND TO ENSURE THAT FAVORABLE POW/MIA PROVISIONS

WERE INCLUDED IN THE FINAL VERSION OF THE DOCUMENT. THESE EFFORTS WERE SUCCESSFUL SINCE THE LAO PARTIES SIGNED, ON SEPTEMBER 14, A PROTOCOL WHICH INCLUDED MORE POSITIVE PROVISIONS ON THE POW/MIA PROBLEM THAN APPEARED IN THE FEBRUARY 21 AGREEMENT. GIVEN THE LACK OF INTEREST BY THE TWO LAO PARTIES IN THEIR OWN POW/MIA PROBLEM, WE CONSIDER IT A MAJOR ACCOMMODATION THAT THE POW/MIA PROBLEM WAS TREATED IN DETAIL IN THE PROTOCOL.

2. DURING THE LATTER PART OF MAY, THE LPF ESTABLISHED AN OFFICIAL POSITION ON THE U.S. PW ISSUE BY PUBLICLY STATING THAT IT HAD RELEASED ALL AMERICAN MILITARY AND CIVILIAN PERSONNEL TAKEN PRISONER ON LAOTIAN SOIL PRIOR

TO THE SIGNING OF THE FEBRUARY 21 AGREEMENT. IN JUNE, IT ACKNOWLEDGED THE PRISONER STATUS OF CONTINENTAL AIR SERVICES CONTRACT PILOT EMMET KAY AND INDICATED HIS RELEASE WOULD BE PURSUANT TO THE PROVISIONS OF THE AGREEMENT; I.E., WITHIN 60 DAYS OF FORMATION OF THE GOVERNMENT. AN EXCHANGE OF LETTERS AND PACKAGES BETWEEN KAY AND HIS FAMILY BEGAN IN JULY AND HAS CONTINUED TO DATE. THE EMBASSY ALSO ATTEMPTED TO INFLUENCE THE LPF TO ADHERE TO GENEVA AGREEMENTS REGARDING THE PUBLIC PROPAGANDA EXPLOITATION OF KAY. AN EMBASSY LETTER TO KAY, INDICATING OFFICIAL CONCERN REGARDING HIS WELFARE, WAS RECENTLY ACCEPTED FOR DELIVERY TO HIM BY THE LPF DELEGATION. INDICATIONS ARE THAT KAY IS BEING WELL-TREATED.

3. SINCE MAY, THERE HAVE BEEN SIX U.S. POW/MIA DELEGATION VISITS TO VIENTIANE (INCLUDING ENTIRE-MEMBER DELEGATION FROM THE NATIONAL LEAGUE OF FAMILIES IN OCTOBER) TO ARTICULATE CONTINUED U.S. POPULAR CONCERN REGARDING THE POW/MIA. FOUR OF THESE DELEGATIONS WERE RECEIVED BY THE LPF PERMREP IN VIENTIANE AND ALTHOUGH HE OFFERED NO SUBSTANTIVE INFORMATION TO THE GROUPS, HE AT LEAST DISCUSSED THE PROBLEM IN A CONGENIAL ATMOSPHERE. THE STANDARD LPF PITCH DURING EACH OF THESE MEETINGS WAS THAT: THE LPF HOLDS NO LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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PAGE 03 VIENTI 08139 01 OF 02 010658Z

MORE U.S. POW'S, EXCEPT FOR EMMET KAY, AND THE U.S. MIA RESOLUTION PROBLEM WOULD BE ADDRESSED IN ACCORDANCE WITH THE PROTOCOL PROVISIONS.

4. PARAGRAPH XVIII OF THE SEPTEMBER 14 PROTOCOL (REF B) LIMITS CASUALTY RESOLUTION ACTIVITIES TO THE TWO LAO PARTY JOINT CENTRAL COMMISSION TO IMPLEMENT THE AGREEMENT (JCCIA), WITH OUTSIDE ASSISTANCE, IF

REQUESTED BY MUTUAL AGREEMENT, PROVIDED BY THE INTERNATIONAL CONTROL COMMISSION (ICC). U.S. CRASH/GRAVE-SITE VISITATIONS ARE NOT PROVIDED FOR NOR DO THE PROVISIONS MENTION REPATRIATION OF REMAINS OF PERSONNEL WHO DIED IN CAPTIVITY OR AS A RESULT OF BATTLE INCIDENTS. PROVISIONS ARE MADE FOR: A MUTUAL EXCHANGE OF A LIST OF THE NUMBER OF PW'S (ALL NATIONALITIES) AND NAMES OF PERSONNEL WHO DIED IN CAPTIVITY TO BE ACCOMPLISHED 15 TO 30 DAYS AFTER SIGNING OF THE PROTOCOL (NOTE: THE TERMINAL DATE FOR THIS ACTION HAS PASSED); THE RELEASE OF ALL PW'S WITHIN 60 DAYS AFTER THE FORMATION OF THE COALITION GOVERNMENT, TIMED TO THE WITHDRAWAL OF FOREIGN TROOPS; AND AN EXCHANGE OF MIA INFORMATION (ALL NATIONALITIES) AFTER ALL PW'S HAVE BEEN RELEASED.

5. IT IS RECOMMENDED THAT THE ABOVE-MENTIONED FACTORS OF THE PROTOCOL BE BRIEFED IN DETAIL TO COMMITTEE PERSONNEL TO OFFSET MISINFORMATION ABOUT FUTURE

CASUALTY RESOLUTION ACTIVITIES IN LAOS CIRCULATED BY THE MEDIA AND OTHER MISINFORMED SOURCES.

6. CURRENTLY, THE MOST ENCOURAGING SIGN ON THE HORIZON IS THAT THE LPF SIDE OF THE JCCIA RECOGNIZES THE EXCHANGE OF INFORMATION ON NUMBERS AND NATIONALITY OF PW'S AND NAMES OF DIC'S HIGH PRIORITY MATTER (SEE REF C) WHICH COULD PRECEDE THE FORMATION OF THE COALITION GOVERNMENT. THEY ALSO ACKNOWLEDGE THE EXCHANGE OF MIA INFORMATION AS AN IMPORTANT PROVISION IN THE PROTOCOL. DURING PREVIOUS DEMARCHES WITH LPF DELEGATION LEADERSHIP IN VIENTIANE, THEY HAVE IMPLIED THAT THE LPF OFFICIALS IN SAM NEUA DO NOT HAVE TOO MUCH LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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PAGE 04 VIENTI 08139 01 OF 02 010658Z

MIA INFORMATION. LAST JULY, WE PROVIDED THE LPF WITH A DETAILED LISTING OF U.S. MISSING AND DEAD (BODIES NOT RECOVERED) (REF D) IN LAOS. IT IS HOPED THAT THIS LIST WILL PROVIDE A REFERENCE OR STARTING POINT THAT THEY CAN BUILD ON (IF THEY ARE SO MOTIVATED).

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PAGE 01 VIENTI 08139 02 OF 02 010717Z

11

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LIMITED OFFICIAL USE SECTION 2 OF 2 VIENTIANE 8139

7. SINCE THE VAST MAJORITY OF THE CRASH INCIDENTS OCCURRED IN NVA-CONTROLLED AREAS IN LAOS, THE NVA ARE THE MOST LOGICAL SOURCE OF INFORMATION PERTAINING TO CRASH SITES, RECOVERED REMAINS AND PERSONNEL WHO DIED IN CAPTIVITY. THE PROBLEMS ARE: WILL THEY FUNNEL WHAT INFORMATION THEY HAVE THROUGH THE LPF AND IS THE INFORMATION ON DECEASED PERSONNEL ACCURATE ENOUGH TO ACCEPT AS FACT WITHING EXAMINATION OF THE REMAINS? IF THE INITIAL MIA INFORMATION IS SPARSE AND POORLY DOCUMENTED, THE EMBASSY, WITH JCRC ASSISTANCE, IS PREPARED TO PRESENT DETAILED INDIVIDUAL DOSSIERS ON CERTAIN SPECIFIC CASES, TO STIMULATE A RESPONSE.

8. IN SUMMARY, THE POW/MIA PICTURE IN LAOS REMAINS OBSCURE. ONCE THE JCCIA ADDRESSES THE PROBLEM, WE WILL BE IN A BETTER POSITION TO PREDICT FUTURE LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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PAGE 02 VIENTI 08139 02 OF 02 010717Z

DEVELOPMENTS. THE JCRC LIAISON OFFICER IN VIENTIANE IS A FULL COLONEL, WITH CONSIDERABLE POW/MIA EXPERIENCE, WHO WORKS IN THE POLITICAL SECTION OF THE EMBASSY. HIS PRESENCE ENSURES THAT ATTENTION TO FUTURE JCCIA

CASUALTY RESOLUTION ACTIVITIES AND ACTIONS THAT COULD
BE TAKEN TO PROMOTE PROGRESS OF THE MIA PROBLEM WILL
BE KEPT ON AN INTENSIFIED FULL-TIME BASIS.
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